



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

LTC #: 202-2006

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor David Dermer and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: August 18, 2006

SUBJECT: **Proposed Expansion of the Flamingo Park Local Historic District**

Pursuant to Section 118-591 of the City Code, when the Historic Preservation Board directs staff to prepare a designation report for a proposed new historic district or site, at a meeting where all property owners of record within a proposed district or site are provided written notice of such meeting within 5 days, "Interim Procedures" are set into motion for any demolition permit within the proposed district boundaries. Such "Interim Procedures" specify that the issuance of any demolition permit within the proposed site or district boundaries requires the approval of the Historic Preservation Board for a period of 60 days from the date the Board directs staff to prepare a designation report. Within this 60 day period the City Commission may, by a five-sevenths vote, deny or modify the proposed designation boundaries.

On July 27, 2006, the Historic Preservation Board held a special meeting to consider a Preliminary Evaluation and Recommendation Report relative to the westward expansion of the boundaries of the local Flamingo Park Historic District to include all properties on the east side of Alton Road between 7th Street and 14th Street. At this meeting, where all property owners of record within the proposed district were provided written notice 5 days in advance, the Board directed the Planning Department to prepare a formal Historic Designation Report for the proposed westward expansion of the local Flamingo Park Historic District to include all properties on the east side of Alton Road between 7th and 14th Streets.

This action of the Historic Preservation Board has set in motion the aforementioned "Interim Procedures" for any demolition permit within the proposed district boundaries, whereby the requirements for the issuance of a demolition permit, as more specifically set forth in Section 118-591(c) of the City Code, shall be applicable for 60 days from the July 27, 2006 meeting of the Historic Preservation Board. Within these 60 days, the City Commission may, by a five-sevenths vote, deny or modify the proposed designation boundaries; the only City Commission meeting scheduled within this timeframe is on September 6, 2006.

In the event the City Commission elects not to deny or modify the proposed designation, these interim procedures shall continue to apply if the Historic Preservation Board votes to proceed with the designation process at a public hearing with a 30 day notice requirement, as more specifically provided in Section 118-164 of the City Code. Given the 60 day timeframe required by the Code, the Historic Preservation Board will consider a formal extension of the interim procedures at their September 12, 2006 meeting, unless otherwise directed by the City Commission.

Attached, please find a copy of the Preliminary Evaluation and Appraisal Report, prepared by the Planning Department, which outlines the initial evaluation of the proposed expansion of the Flamingo Park District.

Letter to Commission- Proposed Expansion of the Flamingo Park Local Historic District
August 18, 2006
Page 2

Please advise if you would like this matter scheduled for discussion at the September 6, 2006 City Commission meeting.

Attachment (1)
JMG:TM JGG:TRM

C: Tim Hemstreet, Assistant City Manager
Robert Parcher, City Clerk
Jorge G. Gomez, Planning Director
Gary Held, First Assistant City Attorney

F:\cmgr\ALL\HEMSTREET\LTC-Flamingo Park Expansion..doc

RECEIVED
06 AUG 18 PM 2:58
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE



MIAMI BEACH

HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD PRELIMINARY EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION REPORT

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

FROM: Jorge G. Gomez, Director
Planning Department *WHE for JGG*

DATE: July 27, 2006 Meeting

RE: HPB File No. 3861. Possible Westward Expansion of the Flamingo Park Historic District

PRESENTATION OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

A presentation by the City of Miami Beach Planning Department to the Historic Preservation Board of a Preliminary Evaluation and Recommendation Report relative to the possible westward expansion of the boundaries of the local Flamingo Park Historic District to include all properties on the east side of Alton Road between 7th Street and 14th Street.

BACKGROUND

At its July 13, 2006 meeting, the City of Miami Beach Historic Preservation Board discussed the possible westward expansion of the boundaries of the local Flamingo Park Historic District to include all properties on the east side of Alton Road between 7th Street and 14th Street. At this meeting, the Board directed staff to prepare a preliminary evaluation and recommendation relative to this possible expansion area, and further directed staff to schedule a special meeting of the Board on July 27, 2006, to review and consider the evaluation and recommendation.

The Flamingo Park Historic District was originally designated by the City of Miami Beach in April 1990 to extend local protection to part of the City that had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. The District's original boundaries extended roughly from Sixth Street to South Lincoln Lane, from Washington Court to Lenox Court. In May 1992, the City approved the expansion of the northern boundary of the District to North Lincoln Lane, in order to include the properties on both sides of Lincoln Road.

The western boundary of the Flamingo Park Historic District runs along Lenox Court from 6th to 16th Streets, except for the 1100 block (Flamingo Park), where the boundary juts out to Alton Road. The presently proposed expansion of the District affects the four blocks to the south of the Park and the two blocks to its north, and would bring the western boundary of the District out to the eastern right-of-way line of Alton Road continuously from 7th to 14th Streets. At present, there are thirty one (31) properties in the subject expansion area, of which all but four (4) are considered "Contributing" structures.

EVALUATION

I. Historic Significance

As described in the Flamingo Park Historic District designation report, this land was first platted in 1914 by J.E. and J.N. Lummus as the Third Addition to their Ocean Beach Subdivision, before Miami Beach had yet been incorporated. Much of the actual landmass was created by dredging bay bottom onto the native mangrove swamp. In 1916 the Lummus brothers, in financial straits, sold their property west of Washington Avenue to the Miami Ocean View Company, which included Carl G. Fisher, James Allison, James Snowden, and others. The Lummus brothers were also partners in the company until Newton B.T. Roney bought out their interests in 1921. Also in 1921, the Miami Ocean View Company platted the Lenox Manor Subdivision, which comprised six square blocks, from Alton Road to Michigan Avenue between 8th and 11th Streets. Three blocks of the proposed Alton Road Expansion lie in the Lenox Manor subdivision; all the rest is in Ocean Beach Addition 3.

The southern end of the Miami Beach peninsula was the first area to be settled, and the completion of the County (now MacArthur) Causeway in 1920 made 5th Street a major thoroughfare. Alton Road, said to have been named by Carl Fisher after Alton, Illinois, was a major north-south artery on the west side of the island by the 1920s. The heyday of the Florida Boom came to an end in 1926, when the September hurricane was followed by several years of stagnation. By the 1930s, as the Great Depression began, Miami Beach enjoyed a resurgence of resort development, with the construction of hundreds of modest hotels, apartments, and residences that now comprise the world-famous "Art Deco" District (officially known as the Miami Beach Architectural District on the National Register of Historic Places).

The twenty seven (27) preliminarily determined Contributing structures in the proposed Flamingo Park Historic District westward expansion area were all constructed between 1933 and 1961, representing the Depression and early post-World War II eras. Fully half of these -- fourteen small houses between 12th and 14th Streets -- are the remains of a bungalow colony that originally extended almost to 15th Street. (One other remnant of this colony still stands at 1439 Alton Road, outside the area of the proposed expansion.) All these bungalows were built by the Lester F. Preu Realty Company between 1933 and 1936, and were all designed by architect Robert M. Little early in his career. A fifteenth bungalow in the proposed historic district expansion area, the house at 1355 Alton Road, was not part of the Lester Preu colony but was designed by Joseph J. DeBrita in 1940.

Originally constructed as single family homes, these fifteen bungalows, zoned RO (Residential Office), now are nearly all occupied by small businesses such as medical and dental offices, realty and insurance concerns, a daycare center, and a plant nursery. A prime example of adaptive re-use, this row of bungalows serves as a buffer between busy Alton Road and the historic residential neighborhood to the east. Historic designation of these structures would afford a rare opportunity to preserve a unique collection of 1930s single-family-homes. Designed predominantly by one architect, Robert Little, this diverse but cohesive group of houses has successfully evolved to other uses while remaining largely intact.

In addition to these bungalows, the other Pre-war buildings in the proposed westward expansion area are a 1933 residence at 745 Alton Road, designed by A. J. Blackstone; a one-story garden-court apartment complex at 725-735 Alton Road, designed by V. H. Nellenbogen in 1936; architect Anton Skislewicz's expansive Phyllis (now Phillip) Gardens courtyard apartments at 835-855 Alton Road, designed in 1940; and the two-story Paul-Hebert apartment house at 825 Alton Road, designed in 1941 by George Pfeiffer and Gerard Pitt. These prewar buildings are generally consistent with variations of the Mediterranean Revival-Art Deco Transitional style of architecture.

The eight (8) other Contributing structures in the proposed westward expansion area are from the early Post-war years, and all but one are apartment buildings. Three (3) are by architect A. Herbert Mathes: the "Lois Ann" (1945) at 815 Alton Road, the "Mark Leo" and the "Kimberley" (both 1947) at 801 and 807 Alton Road, respectively. Gerard Pitt designed 755 Alton Road in 1947, and Henry Hohauser designed 759 Alton Road the following year. Gilbert Fein designed the one-story garden-court Dorick Apartments in 1949, at 1011-1015 Alton Road. The two-story Postwar Modern-style Miami Ad School building at 955 Alton Road was originally a Masonic Temple, the Hibiscus Lodge, designed by Norman M. Giller in 1950. Gerard Pitt designed the apartment house at 1135 8th Street in 1961, also in the Post-war Modern style.

The Non-Contributing structures within the proposed westward expansion area are:

901 Alton Road	shopping complex (2 structures) c. 1992
1025 Alton Road	Alton Palms apts. J. Renner, 1969
1130 11th Street	Apollo House apts. R.S. Schneider, 1967

II. Architect Biographies:

Several of Miami Beach's distinguished local architects are represented in the potential district expansion area, including the following:

Joseph J. DeBrito practiced in Miami Beach from the 1930s to the 1950s. He designed dozens of residential, hotel and apartment buildings, mostly in ArtDeco style. These include the Villa Louisa and Ocean Blue hotels on Ocean Drive, the Dorset and Coral Reef hotels on Collins Avenue, and the Eastview Apartments (Marriott) on Washington Avenue. Together with A. Kononoff he designed the Mount Vernon and Monticello (Harding) hotels at 63rd Street in 1946.

Gilbert M. Fein (1920-2003) was from New York City and studied architecture at New York University. He served in the Army Corps of Engineers during World War II and settled in Miami Beach after the war. He designed hundreds of residential and commercial buildings in South Florida in the new Postwar style, becoming "one of the masters of Modernism."¹ Most of Fein's comfortably livable buildings are unassuming and not prominent landmarks, but some of the better-known are:

Starlite Hotel	750 Ocean Drive
News Cafe	800 Ocean Drive
Helen Mar Annex	2445 Lake Pancoast Drive
Lake View Apartments	4780 Pinetree Drive
Park Isle Club	780 73rd Street

(((The Gilbert Fein Neighborhood Conservation District was recently designated by the City of Miami Beach on 16th Terrace west of West Avenue, commemorating several of Fein's apartment buildings there.)))

Norman Giller is still an active architect on the Beach together with his son Ira. Norman Giller is well known as one of Florida's most prolific and influential architects of the Postwar Modern style. Born in Jacksonville in 1918, he graduated from the University of Florida in 1945 and worked with Henry Hohauser and Albert Anis in his early career.² He pioneered the use of air conditioning, flat-slab construction techniques, and early motel design. His buildings include the Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood (demolished), the Ocean Palm and Thunderbird Motels in Sunny Isles, and in Miami Beach, the Carillon Hotel and the North Shore Community Center.

¹ Obituary, Miami Herald: March 11, 2003, p.4-B.

² E.P. Nash & R. Robinson, Mimo: Miami Modern Revealed: Chronicle Books, 2004; pp. 90-94.

Henry Hohauser (1889-1963)

Born in New York City and educated at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y., Hohauser came to Miami in 1932. He was a practicing architect in Miami Beach for over 20 years and was one of the most prolific. His firm designed over 300 buildings in the Miami area and he is "generally credited with being the originator of modernism in Miami Beach."³ Just a few of Hohauser's buildings in Miami Beach's historic districts are:

Park Central Hotel	640 Ocean Drive
Colony Hotel	736 Ocean Drive
Edison Hotel	960 Ocean Drive
Cardozo Hotel	1300 Ocean Drive
Essex House	1001 Collins Ave

Robert M. Little came to Miami from Philadelphia in 1925, and worked for Robert A. Taylor (designer of Roney's Spanish Village on Espanola Way) before starting his own practice in 1933. He rose to prominence as a residential architect in Miami Beach prior to World War II, with many of his buildings in North Beach. After the war he worked more in Miami, and is best known for his work on the Merrick Building at the University of Miami.

A. Herbert Mathes was active in Miami Beach from the 1940s to the 1960s, designing hotel, residential, and civic architecture, including the Revere (demolished), Continental, Geneva, Parisian, and Allison Hotels, the Golden Gate apartments, and the Miami Beach Public Library at 2110 Collins Avenue (demolished).

Victor H. Nellenbogen (1888-1959), a native of Hungary schooled in New York, came to Miami Beach in 1928 and became a prominent designer of residential and hotel architecture in both Mediterranean Revival and Art Deco styles. His hotels include the Bowman (Shep Davis Plaza), Savoy Plaza, the Nash, the Alamac, the Franklin, and the Lord Tarleton (Crown/Ramada). He also remodeled the Sterling Building at 927 Lincoln Road in Art Deco style in 1941.

Gerard Pitt (1885-1971) was born in New Rochelle, New York, and graduated from Columbia University in 1907. In his early career he worked in New York City and Detroit. He moved to Miami in 1930 and was in partnership with George L. Pfeiffer, 1940-41. Pitt served as supervising architect for the southeast district of the Florida Hotel Commission from 1935 to 1957.⁴ In Miami Beach, he designed dozens of mostly small-scale apartment buildings in Art Deco and Postwar Modern styles from 1940 to the late 1960s, when he was in his 80s. These include:

Lincoln Arms	1800 James Ave.
Miljean	1831 James Ave.
Tropical Gardens	1600 Collins Ave.
Clifton Hotel	1343 Collins Ave.

Anton Skislewicz (1895-1980), a native of Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, and World War I aviator, immigrated to New York after that war and graduated from Columbia University in 1929. Drawn by the Depression-era building boom in Miami Beach, he opened a practice here in 1934 and contributed a European sensibility to local architecture. His early work in naval architecture and aviation is clearly

³ Howard Kleinberg, Miami Beach: A History, p. 129.

⁴ Membership application, American Institute of Architects, Coral Gables, Fla.

evident in his streamlined buildings. Skislewicz also designed a limited-edition limousine for Lincoln Motors in 1938. During World War II he closed his practice and returned to shipbuilding in Tampa, Florida.⁵

III. Ratio of Contributing Structures

A preliminary review of the thirty one (31) principal structures located in the proposed western expansion area suggests that twenty seven (27) of these structures (or **87 percent**) are Contributing and four (4) structures (or **13 percent**) are Non-Contributing. Of the four (4) Non-Contributing structures, 901 Alton Road is a recently constructed one story shopping plaza (c. 1992) built around a raised surface parking lot. It is comprised of an 'L' shaped and a free-standing structure, and replaced the Sun Plaza Motor Court, built at that location in 1953. The other two (2) Non-Contributing structures are the Alton Palms apartments, at 1025 Alton Road, and Apollo House apartments, at 1130 11th Street (corner of Alton Road). Both are seven story apartment buildings constructed in the late 1960s.

It should be noted, however, that one of the buildings that has been preliminarily determined to be a Contributing structure in the proposed historic district expansion area, 1011-1015 Alton Road, the Dorick apartments (designed by Gilbert Fein, in 1949), is prone to serious site flooding due to low elevation. It is unknown how and if this condition can be corrected in the future, thus this factor should be realistically taken into consideration when determining the contributing status of the Dorick apartments. It is also noted that 927 and 939 Alton Road are currently vacant lots, where a 1930s garden apartment complex, designed by B. Kingston Hall, was recently demolished. The current day Miami Ad School building (originally the Masonic Temple designed by Norman Giller, in 1950), at 955 Alton Road, however, anchors the north end of the 900 Alton Road block as a very important Contributing structure.

Notwithstanding the afore-mentioned Non-Contributing structures and vacant lots, the proposed westward expansion area possesses a significant concentration of contributing structures defined and united aesthetically by their respective historic development eras. This is particularly evident between 7th Street and 9th Street and between 12th Street and 14th Street. Further, 955 Alton Road represents a significant Postwar modern landmark at the northeast corner of the 900 Alton Road block.

RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, based upon the evidence presented and the historical and architectural significance of the proposed historic district expansion area, and in accordance with Sec. 118, Article X, Division 4, of the Land Development Regulations of the City Code, the staff of the City of Miami Beach Planning Department recommends that the Historic Preservation Board direct staff to prepare a formal Historic Designation Report for the proposed Westward Expansion of the Flamingo Park Historic District to include all properties on the east side of Alton Road between 7th and 14th Streets.

5 Clotilde Luce, "Anton Skislewicz," *Home Miami*, May 2006, pp. 108-111.

APPENDIX I

PROPERTIES LIST

(C = Contributing, NC = Non-Contributing)

Preliminary Determination

725-35	Alton Road	"Twin Harbor" apts.	Med-Deco	V.H.Nellenbogen	1936	C
745	"	Residence	Med-Deco	A.J. Blackstone	1933	C
755	"	apts.	PWM	Gerard Pitt	1947	C
759	"	apts.	PWM	Henry Hohausen	1948	C
801	"	Mark Leo apts.	Deco	A.H.Mathes	1947	C
807	"	Kimberley apts.	Deco	"	1947	C
815	"	Lois Ann apts.	PWM	"	1945	C
825	"	Paul-Hebert apts.	Med-Deco	Pfeiffer & Pitt	1941	C
835-855	"	Phillip Gardens	Med-Deco	Anton Skislewicz	1940	C
901	"	shopping plaza				NC
955	"	Masonic Temple	PWM	Norman M. Giller	1950	C
1011-1015	"	Dorick Apts.	PWM	Gilbert Fein	1949	C
1025	"	Alton Palms apts.		J. Renner	1969	NC
1211	"	Residence (office)	Med-Deco	Robert M. Little	1936	C
1215	"	Residence	"	"	1934	C
1225	"	Residence	"	"	1934	C
1235	"	Residence (front addtn)	"	"	1934	C
1239	"	Residence (plant nursery)	"	"	1934	C
1247	"	Residence (realty office)	"	"	1934	C
1257	"	Residence	Streamline	"	1935	C
1301	Alton Road	Residence	Med-Deco	Robert M. Little	1936	C

1315	"	Residence (dentist)	"	"	1934	C
1321	"	Residence (office)	"	"	1934	C
1329	"	Residence	"	"	1933	C
1335	"	Residence (dentist)	"	"	1934	C
1343	"	Residence (preschool)	"	"	1934	C
1345	"	Residence (medical office)	"	"	1934	C
1355	"	Residence (realty office)	"	J.J.DeBrita	1940	C
1135 8th Street		Apts.	PWM			
1130 11th Street		Apollo House apts.		R.S.Schneider	1967	NC

APPENDIX II NEIGHBORING PROPERTIES NOT IN PROPOSED EXPANSION AREA

621 Alton Road (rear) (annex)	2-story residence 2-story apt. 1-story office	frame vernacular Deco	L.M.Dixon 1948	Pre-1932
1421 Alton Road	A & P grocery (CVS drugs)	PWM -altered	J.A.Fusco	1961
1427	2-story store		Jaime Salles	1957
1435	1-story store		Bliss	1970
1439	(rear) residence - (spa)	Med-Deco	Robt. M. Little	1935
" (front) restaurant addition				2000
1441-1447	1-story stores		A. Mandel	1966
1453	Standard Oil station (Chevron)	altered	St. John Co.	(1924)
1501	store (Blockbuster)			
1515-1539	stores			
1545	garage	Deco	L.M. Dixon	1934
1575	Firestone station	Deco	Zurwelle & Whitaker	1939

JGG:WHC
L:\PLAN\HPB\FLAMINGO PARK HD Expansion to Alton Rd - Prelim Eval.doc

Possible Westward Expansion of Flamingo Park Historic District

